

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE March 18, 2009 WASHINGTON, D.C. - "The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) welcomes the administration's decision today to appoint a special envoy on Sudan," said Felice D. Gaer, chair of the Commission. "This is one of the recommendations that we made to the Obama administration last month. The special envoy is uniquely positioned to keep the North-South Sudan peace process moving forward and to negotiate an end to the Darfur genocide." In addition, in order to secure the North-South peace and thereby advance vital efforts to end the genocide in Darfur, USCIRF recommends:

- the Special Envoy focus on the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) that ended Africa's long-running civil war;
- that the parties to the CPA hold the elections and referenda called for in the CPA;
- that the Obama administration assist the Southern Sudanese in building defensive capacity to protect civilians and deter the outbreak of another civil war;
- that the Obama administration strengthen reconciliation and the rule of law in Southern Sudan; and
- that the Obama administration help the Southern Sudanese build an economy, with the necessary institutional infrastructure and human capital, to support a lasting peace.

USCIRF first recommended that the president appoint a special envoy to Sudan in May 2001. The Commission has made three visits to Sudan and it held a Capitol Hill hearing on the war-torn nation in September 2008.

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